



**Winter Shelter/Community Stabilization
for Returnee IDPs**

Afghanistan

Final Report to OFDA

21 May 2003

1 Executive Summary

Organization:	Concern Worldwide	Date:	21 May 2003
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Program Title: **Winter Shelter/Community Stabilization for Return IDPs**
Grant No.: **HAD-G-00-02-00023-00**
Country: **Afghanistan**
Disaster/Hazard: **Complex political emergency**
Reporting Period: **1 October 2001 – 31 January 2003**

Objective # 1: Achievement of this objective was attained through hiring of project staff; establishment of project offices and stores; identifying beneficiaries according to agreed criteria; sourcing, procurement, and transportation of shelter materials; distribution of the materials to the beneficiaries; and internal evaluation the project. Concern supplied shelter kits to 6,042 beneficiary families (36,252 beneficiary individuals) in this project.

Indicator and current measure:

The number of beneficiary families in receipt of shelter material. Concern has achieved 121% of this objective, exceeding the stated target of 5,000 beneficiary families by 1,042.

Resources (OFDA figures only):

Budget for Objective # 1:	\$1,203,343	Expended:	\$1,203,343
		Balance:	\$0



IDPs cross the former front line of fighting, returning to their villages in November 2001.

2 Program Overview

2.1 Goal & Objectives

2.1.1 Objective:

To improve the access of IDP families to adequate shelter (relative to the conditions in northeast Afghanistan) to ensure that households have a healthy and sanitary environment to enable safe and secure livelihoods.

2.2 Target Population & Critical Needs

In the months leading up to the events of September 11th, the Northeast region of Afghanistan – in addition to suffering general decline over the previous two decades – was in a highly fragile state. Chronic food insecurity combined with severe drought had exhausted family coping mechanisms, famine was a real threat. Fighting between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance had displaced more than 100,000 people, disrupted markets and destroyed houses, farms and infrastructure. A difficult security situation had limited the presence and scope of international aid efforts.

The target population for this program was 30,000 of the estimated 100,000 IDPs in northeast Afghanistan. These IDPs were based in camps in Dashti Qala and Rustaq districts of Takhar province. This population was displaced from their homelands as their communities were all situated in front line areas in the conflict. The majority of these IDPs were from Talaqan and Khwoja Ghar districts in Takhar province.

A detailed survey of individual dwellings was completed by mid January 2002 in which a total of 2,180 families were initially identified as requiring shelter assistance. As IDP families returned to their villages a reassessment was required in relation to the Chechka district (containing 8 villages), which identified a further 149 families in need of shelter assistance. The first phase of this project targeted the population of Khwoja Ghar district – which was on the front line during the fighting – and distributed shelter materials to 13,974 beneficiaries (2,329 families) there.

Concern identified Chal as the target area for the second phase, as it too was a front-line district and incurred widespread destruction of homes in many villages. A preliminary survey of 63 villages in Chal district was conducted and, based on the results, a program office in Chal village (district center) was established. A further detailed survey was undertaken in 30 villages and distributions of shelter materials to 3,645 families (21,870 beneficiaries) were carried out.

In addition, shelter materials were distributed to 408 beneficiaries (68 families) in Warsaj district in response to a local emergency in August 2002¹.

¹ OFDA permission was sought and secured for the distribution.

Project Area	Individuals	Families	
Khoja Ghar (Phase I)	13,974	2,329	
Chal (Phase II)	21,870	3,645	
Warsaj (local emergency)	408	68	Percentage
Project Total	36,252	6,042	121%
Project Target	30,000	5,000	100%
Excess	6,252	1,042	21%

2.3 Geographic Location

The project was located in three districts of Takhar Province, northeast Afghanistan. The first phase of the project was in Khwoja Ghar district; the second was in Chal district. As noted above, an additional 68 beneficiary families were targeted in Warsaj district, also in Takhar Province.

3 Program Performance

3.1 Program Performance

3.1.1 Actual Accomplishments

- **Reintegration:** Concern efficiently supported the resettlement of roughly 5,650 displaced families in the Khwoja Ghar district (Takhar Province) through the provision of critical food and non-food inputs - including shelter material for approximately 2,300 of those families - prior to and during the winter of 2001 and 2002. The speed with which Concern began delivering goods to IDPs, the quality of the items, and the organization of the distributions was reported to be exemplary by local officials, other NGOs, and beneficiaries.
- **Speed of response:** Concern responded quickly to the needs of IDPs - returning international staff to work and live in the community (and particularly to the Zard Kamar sub-office) just days after the previously divided province of Takhar was recaptured by the Northern Alliance in early November 2001. With the rapid and unforeseen return of IDPs to their homes, Concern adjusted its programming response to ensure that beneficiaries would be covered in their villages (rather than, as originally foreseen, in IDP settlements). By late November/early December, Concern had already begun distribution in returnee villages of wheat flour and some shelter materials. Beneficiaries did not have to wait long at the distribution points.
- **Halting further displacement and migration:** The project made a vital contribution to negating pressure to displace or migrate over winter. Results from the internal evaluation held in Chal indicate that the provision of shelter kits from this project was the primary reason people chose not to move.
- **Favoring local procurement:** Concern stressed local and regional purchases whenever possible and cost effective, increasing the impact of its assistance by stimulating the local economy. The bulk of all the shelter procurement was done locally. Stoves, windows and

doors were made by local carpenters and metal workers. Concern procured all shelter materials, save plastic sheeting, within Afghanistan. Local purchase resulted in injecting almost \$700,000 into the economy. The shelter material were also deemed to be of very high quality (Sphere standard or better) and appreciated by beneficiaries.

- **Exceeding the objective:** The project achieved 121% of the objective, by providing shelter materials to 36,252 beneficiaries (6,042 families), instead of the planned 30,000 individuals (5,000 families). This represents a significant achievement for Concern and project staff in particular, as operational conditions, market prices for materials, and access conditions changed frequently during the project period. All families considered vulnerable in Khoja Ghar and Chal benefited from the project, in addition to those displaced by a localized emergency in Warsaj.
- **Adhering to the budget:** The project utilized 100% of OFDA funding, in addition to allocated private resources. A timely budget revision in mid-2002 saw international and national staff costs reduce, facilitating the procurement of additional shelter kits. As the US\$:Afghani exchange rate fluctuated violently during the project period, remaining within budget is a notable achievement of project staff.
- **Coordination:** During the course of the project Concern has participated in all NGO coordination meetings in Takhar and in sectoral coordination meetings for shelter. Through these processes Concern ensured that there was no duplication of provision of shelter assistance in the areas in which this program is being carried out.
- At the end of the project, each family received the following shelter materials:

	No. of beneficiary families	Timber poles [20 Unit]	Doors [1 Unit]	Windows [1 Unit]	Bamboo Mats [6 Units]	Plastic Sheets [6m x 4m Unit]	Nails [2kg pack]
Phase 1	2,329	2,180	2,180	2,180	1,997	2,192	1,531.5
Phase 2	3,645	2,548	3,632	3,645	2,572	2,746	3,510
Additional	68	68	68	68	68	68	0
TOTAL	6,042	4,796	5,880	5,893	4,637	5,006	5,041.5

3.1.2 Constraints/Weaknesses

- **Difficulties in assessments:** Assessment of returnees was labour-intensive; every household in the Concern areas was visited more than once to determine exact shelter needs, and every family received post distribution monitoring visits. It was, however difficult to determine ownership of houses within compounds, and Concern was unable – because of time pressure – to always confirm its initial assessment findings. Some beneficiaries – particularly women – reported their families being excluded.
- **Gender:** The external evaluation uncovered divergence in the perceptions of women and men beneficiaries about Concern assistance to IDPs. Women interviewed knew much less than men about the entitlements. They also reported favouritism in targeting and distribution – in contrast to most men and possibly because of their ignorance of Concern’s program.
- **Beneficiary Selection:** The internal evaluation noted some deficiencies in the beneficiary registration system, which may have impacted negatively upon distribution accuracy. Beneficiary lists were not verified, and too much faith was placed in community representatives to identify genuine beneficiaries for the project, and inform them of their eligibility. Allegations of misdemeanors were made against local government representatives, village elders, and some project staff in focus group discussions. Concern is investigating those contentions made against its staff, which center around the possible sale of a small number of beneficiary registration cards. Concern will inform OFDA of any relevant results to this investigation.
- **Distribution:** The evaluation also noted that distribution points were often far too distant from beneficiaries’ houses, causing major transport problems for them. Distribution points were restricted due to a lack of secure storage space and access difficulties; however, this resulted in an un-quantified level of sale of shelter kit items, as some beneficiaries were physically unable to transport the poles and doors.
- **Landmines:** Land mines and unexploded ordnance were, in the early stages, a major constraint to Concern’s activities and an ongoing threat to returnees. Concern worked with Halo Trust to address this problem.
- **Insecurity:** Distributions in Khoja Ghar were disrupted by border insecurity during late 2001 and early 2002. Transport vehicles were commandeered for military use, occasionally delaying project implementation. In addition, minefields in project locations delayed the completion of needs assessments, until paths were cleared by de-mining agencies.
- **Currency fluctuations:** Violent fluctuations of the US\$:Afghani exchange rate during late 2001 and early 2002 played havoc with budgets and procurement. The rate rose to twice

and fell to half the normal exchange rate in a short period of time, before stabilizing around the usual rate.

- **Delivery delays:** Poor road and weather conditions combined to delay delivery of materials to Chal and, consequently, delay distributions. Unlike many rural roads in the region, the road linking Chal to Taloqan has yet to be rehabilitated and is barely passable during and after rain and snow.



A returnee stands besides the window frame supplied through Concern's shelter program.

3.2 Success Stories



Re-construction of houses destroyed during Taliban occupation – using Concern-supplied shelter materials – was still underway in villages of Khwoja Ghar District in October 2002

Case Study² Assistance to IDPs: Concern Aid Slowed the Pace of Debt

Mohamed Murat, a day labourer in Kazaq village (Khwoja Ghar District), spent 18 months displaced near Dashti Qala. Together with his wife, his parents and 5 children they stayed in a relative's compound, sleeping in a single room. Once every three to four days he was able to find work. A day's work paid 1.2 -1.5 lac/day (1 lac = 100,000 Afghani), enough - during much of his displacement - to buy just half his family's daily requirement of 1 seer (or 7 kilos) of wheat*. The rest came from family and friends, or he borrowed. By the time the Taliban fell and Mohamed and his family returned to Kazaq in November 2001, he was heavily indebted to local merchants.

Back in Kazak, the family was first helped out by better off neighbours and, soon afterward, by Concern (the family was not receiving aid from any other sources). A Concern staff member surveyed the village and several weeks later the family received the first of 3 monthly distributions of wheat flour (a 50 kilo bag). A few weeks later, distribution of non-food items, shelter material and other food items also began. The roof on Mohamed's house had survived Taliban occupation – a detail picked up by Concern survey – so he received all the planned shelter materials except the roofing poles. By Mohamed's description, Concern distributions were model: they took place just half an hour walk from his home; and he and other villagers rarely had to wait more than an hour. The family is satisfied with - and still using - each of the items that Concern supplied.

When Concern assistance began, Mohamed started using some of his daily wages to begin paying down his debt. Today, several months after Concern's assistance ended, Mohamed is still carrying a debt of about 100 lacs (or equivalent to some 50-75 days of labour), considerably less – he estimates – than if he had not received Concern aid. And the price of wheat has fallen significantly, meaning Mohamed can, for the moment, cover his family's staple food needs from his wages. As winter settles in, though, he will again be forced to leave the village in search of work in nearby towns. The price of wheat will rise as last year's harvest is exhausted, and, once again, Mohamed will likely turn to borrowing to make ends meet.

² Case study from Forgotten Crisis and Swift Response: An Evaluation of Concern Worldwide's Emergency Operations in Afghanistan September 2001 – April 2002

3.3 Lessons Learned

During the course of this program an external evaluation of Concern's emergency response in Afghanistan took place³. While this evaluation looked at Concern's overall emergency response, it included evaluating the shelter program and made some recommendations. In addition, Concern completed an internal evaluation of Phase II of the project during December 2002, once the majority of distributions had taken place. The internal evaluation team was led by the Senior Monitoring & Evaluation Adviser, and composed of project staff from other areas. Many of the accomplishments and constraints/weaknesses referred to above were identified during either the internal and or the external evaluations. Concern will take on board the conclusions and recommendations of the reports in future distribution projects. In addition, within its ongoing projects Concern has already made some positive changes in line with the evaluations' recommendations:

- **Improvements in Gender / Targeting:** In the past females have been excluded from decision making in the public domain and traditional decision-making has been more an act of consultation by a few individuals, which has marginalized the very poor. At the outset of this project Concern had few female staff (either national or international) working on its program and therefore the needs of women were often overlooked. In the past year, Concern has employed female community mobilisers, who work in the community, particularly encouraging the formation of women's and men's groups to participate in the planning of projects that will benefit the whole community. The voices of a cross section of the community (including the very poor, landless, disabled) are encouraged through these male and female groups that are being formed. This process is ensuring greater participation of the whole community in project planning and in targeting projects that benefit poorer sections of the community.
- **Improvements in assessments, monitoring and evaluations:** As stated above assessments now carried will always include meetings with women in the communities targeted. Assessments will be ongoing and programs modified according to informed monitoring reports. Concern Afghanistan's monitoring cell will ensure that monitoring of projects and ensuring that both targeting and projects planned are in line with objectives set. In line with Concern's Project Cycle Management System, evaluations will be carried out for all projects.
- **Logistics:** Ongoing improvements to Concern's logistic and accounting systems ensures that our procurement, purchasing and record-keeping are scrutinized regularly and any discrepancies followed-up on in a timely manner. Systems installed are in line with Concern worldwide standards for operation and training of national and international staff in these systems is on-going at present.

³ Forgotten Crisis and Swift Response: An Evaluation of Concern Worldwide's Emergency Operations in Afghanistan September 2001 – April 2002

3.4 Conclusion

Concern's Rapid Rural Appraisal of June 2002 established that shelter was the primary concern of people in the area and the internal evaluation found that shelter was the most appropriate intervention. In the evaluation, 60% of respondents listed shelter as their primary need. None complained that shelter was an inappropriate or unwanted intervention and many credited the intervention as the sole reason for their non-displacement.